

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 25, 2008

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, on June 24, 2008, I was unavoidably detained and was not able to record my vote for rollcall No. 442. Had I been present I would have voted: rollcall No. 442—"no"—On Motion to Adjourn.

FISA AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 20, 2008

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Madam Speaker, I risk today in opposition to H.R. 6304, The FISA Amendments Act of 2008. As a representative from New York City, I know how important good intelligence is in ensuring that our Nation does not face another terrorist attack. However, we must ensure that we do not trample on civil liberties in the process. This administration has expanded the powers of the government to monitor the actions of American citizens with, unfortunately, too little oversight from Congress or the courts.

While I appreciate the efforts to reach a compromise on this legislation, H.R. 6304 does not go far enough to protect the rights of the American people. The legislation allows for retroactive immunity for telecommunication companies that participated in the Bush administration's warrantless wiretapping program. I also am concerned that most Members of Congress will not have access to important reports issued by the Attorney General and the Director of National Intelligence.

We should stand up for the Constitution and for the rights of our constituents by ensuring that their privacy is better protected.

MEDICARE IMPROVEMENTS FOR PATIENTS AND PROVIDERS ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 24, 2008

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I wish to take a moment to express my enthusiastic support for H.R. 6331, the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act, which amends titles XVII and XIX of the Social Security Act and extends expiring provisions under the Medicare program. H.R. 6331 not only prevents the 10.6 percent pay cut to physicians scheduled to take effect July 1 while maintaining current payment levels for the rest of 2008, but it replaces the additional 5.4 percent cut scheduled on January 1, 2009 with a 1.1 percent increase in Medicare physician payments. By preventing these cuts, suppliers will be able to anticipate the costs that they will incur and will be less likely to withdraw from the program. H.R. 6331 also has a very positive outcome for beneficiaries as well. The

provisions will improve choice and access to health care providers by changing the network requirements for the Medicare Advantage Private Fee for Service Plan. Further the bill will reduce cost-sharing for mental health services and increase coverage for preventive services.

These policy improvements will translate into significant relief for the national medical community, including the 21 hospitals in the Illinois Seventh Congressional District; a district which also has some of the most medically underserved constituents of any in this nation. Many of these individuals are Medicare beneficiaries that seek hundreds of Chicago doctors to provide Medicare services. Therefore, it is in the best interest of my constituents as well as Medicare providers, suppliers, and recipients across this nation that Congress enacts H.R. 6331, The Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act. As a testament to the importance of this issue to Chicago, I received over 50 calls within the last few days urging me to support this bill. I stand with these constituents and Chicago more broadly to support this bill.

I would like to thank Chairman RANGEL for spearheading this legislation. I have fought and will continue to advocate vigorously in Congress alongside my colleagues for the improvement of Medicare resources in support of Medicare providers, suppliers, and beneficiaries.

HONORING CONGRESSWOMAN MARY T. NORTON ON THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 25, 2008

Ms. DELAURO. Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to honor Congresswoman Mary T. Norton of New Jersey on the 70th anniversary of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Congresswoman Norton was instrumental in passing the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, legislation which has greatly impacted our labor history and our history as a Nation.

Growing up, I attended an all-girls Catholic school called Lauralton Hall in Connecticut. Last year, I spoke with Lauralton's current president Barbara Griffin and discussed her research for a master's dissertation she wrote 25 years ago about Mary Norton—the first Democratic woman to serve in Congress and the first woman to chair a major committee in the House. A few weeks later, the dissertation showed up in my mailbox and I sat down with it over the holidays. After reading Barbara's dissertation, I was thoroughly impressed by Mary Norton. Her work laid the foundation that we are building on here today. And she did it all with a skillful blend of strength and compassion.

Mary T. Norton led an extraordinary life. She began her social activism in Jersey City and quickly became the first woman member of the New Jersey Democratic State Committee. She was elected to the House of Representatives for the 12th Congressional District of New Jersey in 1924, where she was the only woman in the House at that time who was not filling her husband's unexpired term

and one of the first women to be elected to and serve in Congress. Norton served in the House until 1951, for a total of 13 terms. During her time in Congress, Norton became the first woman to chair a major committee. In fact, she was head of three committees during her time in the House: Veterans' Affairs, District of Columbia, and Labor.

One of the Congresswoman's most accomplished moments came while she was chair of the Labor Committee in 1938 when the House passed the Fair Labor Standards Act. Despite much opposition to what was at the time a controversial bill and despite the first version of the legislation being rejected, the House passed the final version of the legislation by a vote of 314 to 97. The Fair Labor Standards Act was later signed into law by President Roosevelt on June 25, 1938.

The Fair Labor Standards Act plays a significant role in our labor history and our history as a Nation. It is the formative legislation for the labor rights that we today take for granted—minimum wage, overtime pay, and child labor laws—and greatly improved the quality of life for so many workers in our country. Congresswoman Norton was a champion for the American worker and played an integral role in passing this critical legislation that would shape our Nation for years to come.

I urge my colleagues to stand with me to celebrate and honor the life and work of Congresswoman Mary T. Norton on the 70th anniversary of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TIMOTHY J. WALZ

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 25, 2008

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, on rollcall No. 439, H. Con. Res. 372, Supporting the goals and ideals of Black Music Month and to honor the contributions to our Nation made by African American singers and musicians, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

INTRODUCTION OF EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT INFORMATION ACT OF 2008

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 25, 2008

Mr. EMANUEL. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the Earned Income Tax Credit Information Act of 2008, legislation that will make it easier for millions of Americans to receive the Earned Income Tax Credit, (EITC).

Every year I host tax clinics in my district in order to help my constituents get a fair deal when they file their taxes. Hundreds of my constituents come to these clinics and with the help of volunteers receive thousands of dollars in tax refunds.

But millions of Americans and thousands in my district still don't get the tax credits they deserve, like the EITC. The EITC is the single most important tool we have to encourage work and reduce poverty in our country.

Nationally, over 22 million working Americans benefit from this program and receive

\$43 billion in Federal assistance. That's an average amount of over \$1900 per taxpayer. At \$4 a gallon, an average EITC check can now pay for 32 trips to the gas station to fill your tank.

In my district, over 38,000 taxpayers received \$64 million through the EITC. But because one-quarter of those eligible to receive EITC don't claim it, there are also nearly 13,000 of my constituents who should receive EITC but don't and they're losing out on \$25 million in benefits.

Nationally, there are 7 million Americans who are eligible to receive this benefit but don't. This amounts to a loss of \$14 billion to eligible working Americans.

American families are struggling to get by. The cost of gas, food, education, and health care are skyrocketing. How can we stand by and let the American people leave \$14 billion on the table?

A Republican Governor working with a Democratic legislature has given us a model for addressing this problem. Last year, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law Assembly Bill 650, the Earned Income Tax Credit Information Act. The bill was simple and straightforward. The law requires that California employers notify employees of their potential eligibility for the EITC when they send employees their W-2 forms.

Employers are uniquely positioned to help because they are already providing their employees with their W-2 forms that tell them their earnings for this year. This law simply piggy-backs on that requirement to help employees understand that they may be eligible to receive the EITC.

Our legislation takes the California law and expands it to the rest of the country. Under our bill, employees throughout the country who earn enough to be eligible for the EITC will receive a notice from their employer with their W-2 form telling them about the program and how to learn more about it. Small businesses will not be affected by the bill and the proposal won't cost American taxpayers one single dime. It's a common sense way to ensure families who need it most get the benefits they deserve.

I am hopeful that this legislation will be unnecessary. Today, Sen. SCHUMER and I will send a letter asking the Administration to accomplish this goal by executive order. Secretary Paulson is a supporter of EITC and I'm hopeful that he will build on his role during the economic stimulus debate and embrace this common-sense, fiscally responsible approach to providing hardworking Americans with additional fiscal relief.

Finally, Wal-Mart, the Nation's largest employer, and the SEIU, one of the Nation's leading labor unions, are supporting the bill. They understand the importance of the EITC to their workers and members. In addition, the bill is supported by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Citizens for Tax Justice, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the College and University Professional Association of Human Resources, TJ Maxx, Kindred Healthcare, and Cintas.

INTRODUCTION OF THE VETERANS REVENUE ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2008, H.R. 6366

HON. STEVE BUYER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 25, 2008

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, I am introducing the Veterans Revenue Enhancement Act of 2008, which would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish today not more than seven consolidated patient accounting centers.

The concept of the Consolidated Patient Accounting Center, also known as CPAC, was included as a demonstration project in the Conference Report, House Report 109-95 and Conference Report 109-305, in 2005 accompanying H.R. 2528, requiring the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, to initiate a revenue improvement demonstration project within 60 days after enactment of the bill, Public Law 109-114. The VA followed the recommendations in the report, and created the Mid-Atlantic Consolidated Patient Accounting Center demonstration project located in Asheville, North Carolina.

A recent GAO report reiterates previous findings that third party billing and collection processes at the Department continue to be ineffective and limit the revenue received by VA from third party insurance companies. Hundreds of millions of dollars continue to go uncollected, dollars that could be used to further improve the quality and quantity of veterans' health care.

With the establishment by VA of the Mid-Atlantic Consolidated Patient Accounting Center in Asheville, North Carolina, the collection of third party revenues has improved significantly at the medical centers in VISN 6. By implementing best practices, a standardized revenue cycle for business processes and training of personnel, the majority of the GAO report recommendations on maximizing third party revenue collections have been met.

The demonstration project has proven to be very successful in enhancing the revenue of the department by more than \$12.5 million in increased collections in FY 2007 and \$6.5 million so far in FY 2008 to an overall \$19 million total. Building on this success, my legislation would permit the VA to continue this successful venture at the Mid-Atlantic project in Asheville, North Carolina, and direct the Secretary to establish an additional six centers throughout the country in the next five years.

I urge my colleagues to support the Veterans Revenue Enhancement Act of 2008.

INTRODUCING THE HEALTHY TRANSITION ACT OF 2008

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 25, 2008

Mr. STARK. Madam Speaker, I rise to introduce legislation aimed at addressing the unique needs of young people with serious mental illness as they transition from adolescence into adulthood. Senator GORDON SMITH and Senator CHRIS DODD are introducing identical legislation in the Senate. We have an ob-

ligation to provide appropriate and effective mental health treatment and supports to young adults so that they can transition to healthy and successful adults.

Young adults suffering from mental illness fall through the cracks far too often. Senator SMITH and I requested that the Government Accountability Office, GAO, examine this issue. The GAO recently issued their report and the findings should disturb us all. At least 2.4 million young adults age 18-26 suffer from serious mental illness. Another 9.3 million have mild or moderate mental illness. Currently, there is no specific federal program aimed at these youth. Instead, we are left with a fragmented and ad hoc system that does not meet their unique needs. Not surprisingly, many of these youth are adrift without services, support, or guidance. They have lower education and employment rates than their peers and they are more likely to end up in jail or homeless. For youth who are aging out of foster care with no family supports the situation is particularly dire. One recent study found that these youth suffer from post traumatic stress disorder at rates similar to Iraq War veterans.

The GAO has clearly laid out the problem. But it is not enough to simply describe the current situation and become angry. Our outrage must lead to action. This legislation aims to change the tragic and unnecessary status quo and bring real support to millions of young people.

Some States are making strides to connect young adults with mental illness to systems that can assist them. The GAO documented 4 states—Maryland, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Mississippi—that are doing good work in this area. My home State of California is using dedicated mental health funding to specifically target adolescents and young adults with mental illness. I am pleased that states are undertaking this important work, but the Federal Government should and must play a role. There needs to be improved coordination among the many Federal agencies that provide services to these youth. Most critically, there needs to be Federal support and assistance to states committed to doing the right thing and creating innovative approaches to serve these youth. The Healthy Transition Act will do just that.

This bill builds on the successful Partnership for Youth in Transition Demonstration Program. It will provide grant funding to states to develop statewide coordination plans to assist adolescents and young adults with serious mental health disorders to acquire the skills and resources they need to make a healthy transition into adulthood. The state must specifically plan for youth who are in the juvenile justice system, the child welfare system, and those who have an education plan under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The bill will also provide grant funding for states to successfully implement their plans and create sustainability and comprehensive systems of care. Finally, the legislation will create a Committee of Federal Partners. The Committee will include representatives from all agencies that serve young adults as well as representatives from consumer and family advocacy organizations. The Federal Partners will evaluate the programs, provide technical assistance, and report to Congress on the progress being made.